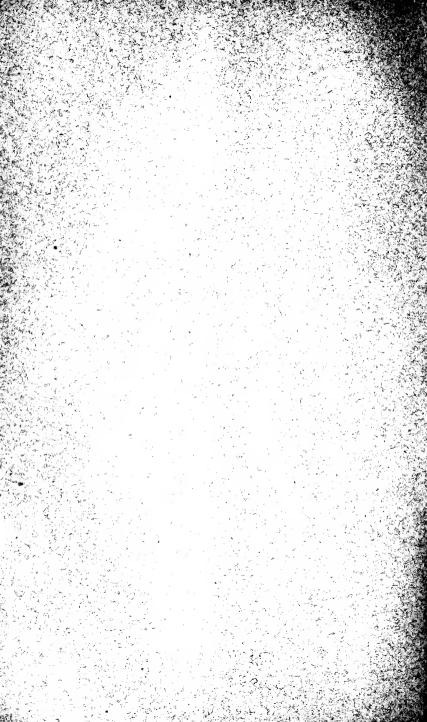# A PROPOSAL

EQUAL REPRESENTATION.

BY

C. A. CRIPPS.

EQUAL REPRESENTATION.

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The phrase "proportional representation" requires explanation. It aptly expresses the relationship which it is desired to establish between the whole body of electors and the representative assembly. It is calculated to convey a wrong impression of the relationship which it is desired to establish between electors in reference to one another. This is a relationship, not of proportion, but of equality. Equality is the basis of electoral reform, and we have adopted the phrase "equal representation" as at once the most expressive, and the least open to misinterpretation.

It must be stated at the outset that no proposal for equal representation can, at the present time, be worked out accurately in detail. Equal representation implies an equal franchise, and a corresponding increase in the number of registered electors. The principle of a proposal can be adequately illustrated in reference to the existing franchise in England and Wales.

One further explanation is needed. It is necessary to institute a comparison between the number

of electors in boroughs and in counties. It is not forgotten that the franchises are different, and that the comparison is in this respect incomplete. The assimilation of the county and the borough franchises would increase the comparative, as well as the actual, numbers of the county electors.

The question of equal representation is involved in that of redistribution. Mr. Hare's celebrated proposal implied the most sweeping measure of redistribution, and the effacement of all local landmarks. It is a masterly solution of a mathematical problem, from which every consideration except that of numbers has been eliminated. Theoretical accuracy could not be attained in any other way. So far as other considerations have to be admitted, there must be an interference with the adjustment of numbers. It is useless not to recognize this in any proposal, which is intended to pass beyond the range of theory, and to be practical and workable.

The factor eliminated by Mr. Hare, but which must be reckoned with in any practicable scheme of representation, is the necessity of adjusting redistribution in reference to existing areas of local government. The importance of local organizations, and their influence over English national life, cannot be overrated. It is not Cornwall or Liverpool that must be represented, but the people of Cornwall or the people of Liverpool, who are united by the bond of local co-operation, and who claim to have their interests protected by members of their own choice.

The two most prominent units of local government

in England are to be found in the counties and the self-governing towns. These should be taken as units of representation, and where the interests of the two are antagonistic, the preference should be given to the counties. The first step in our proposal for equal redistribution is to assign to each county one member. This is essential, so long as the counties are the governing units, in order to guarantee that no district shall be left unrepresented. Yorkshire is counted as though it were three counties, divided into the North, East, and West Ridings, and the Isle of Wight is treated as a county. England and Wales would thus have 55 units of county representation. The total number of members of Parliament elected in England and Wales is 489, and if we deduct from these the 55 assigned in the first place to the counties, there remain 434 to be distributed. From this number the 5 members representing the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge, and London may be subtracted, leaving 429. These 429 members may be equally distributed under a simple self-adjusting arrangement. So soon as may be after any general election, a return should be made of all registered electors. The number returned should be divided by 429, and the resulting number taken as the starting-point from which to reckon the claims of local organizations. Taking the present number of registered electors in England and Wales, and dividing by 429, the result in round figures would be 6100. Any town having a less number of registered electors

than 6100 would form a portion of the county constituency within which it is situated ; but every town having 6100 registered electors or more would be a separate town constituency. The distribution of members among the representative units would depend on the number of their registered electors, and be simply calculated on a mathematical basis. Under the present franchise it is found that the 429 members would be fairly divided between the county and town constituencies ; but the counties will be largely reinforced so soon as votes have been given to the agricultural labourers. Having stated the general outline of the proposal, we shall proceed to consider it, first, as a measure of equal distribution, and secondly, as a measure of equal representation. It is under the second of these heads that the method of voting becomes important.

In the first place, the proposal gives a self-adjusting scheme of redistribution. This is an essential element. A final settlement is required, to avoid the evils of recurring periods of agitation. The objection, which may probably be raised, is the uncertain position of those town constituencies, which are either just under or just over the qualifying test. This is met by the proposal that the calculation, on which the next election is to be based, shall be made as soon as possible after each general election. There would be an ample opportunity of forecasting the future, and of making the necessary rearrangements. No scheme, moreover,

could be self-adjusting which did not alter the units of representation so as to keep them in accord with the shifting of population. It is the substitution of an equitably set machine for the uncertain action of periodical reform bills.

In the second place, the proposal recognizes equality in redistribution. It makes numbers the basis on which the claims of the different constituencies depend. In this respect it is in striking contrast to the present system of distribution, as may be shown by one or two salient examples.

Dorsetshire is represented by no less than 10 members, 3 for the county, and 7 for small boroughs. The largest borough has only 2046 registered electors, far below the qualifying number of 6100. The whole number of registered electors in Dorsetshire is only 16,269, of which 7975 have votes in the county, and 8294 in the boroughs. Let us compare with Dorsetshire such constituencies as Sheffield (43,336 registered electors) and Middlesex (38,373 registered electors), having each 2 representatives. It will be seen that there is a disproportion in the value of a vote in Dorsetshire, and of a vote in Sheffield or Middlesex, which offends every canon of equality. There is a peculiar feature in the comparison of Dorsetshire with Sheffield and Middlesex which may serve to emphasize the absurdity of the present distribution of representatives. 4772 votes in the Dorsetshire boroughs returned to Parliament at the last general election 7 members, whereas 8876 votes in Middlesex, and 16,506 in Sheffield, did

not suffice to elect a single candidate. We will apply
to Dorsetshire, Middlesex, and Sheffield respectively
the self-adjusting test of representation which has
been suggested. Dorsetshire would be allotted 4
members, Middlesex 7, and Sheffield 7 ; and such a
result gives a near approach to the principle of
equality. Cornwall and Wiltshire are instances as
striking as Dorsetshire. The former county returns
13 members, 9 from boroughs having only 8556
registered electors. The latter county returns (ex-
cluding the Cricklade district) 13 members, 9 from
small boroughs having a total number of 9359
registered electors. It is difficult to assign any
valid reason for giving a vote in a Cornwall or a
Wiltshire borough a weight so disproportionate to
that of a vote in the county of Middlesex. Accord-
ing to the present proposal, Cornwall would have 5
members, Wiltshire would have 6, and Middlesex
the comparatively fair number of 7.

One more instance of a different character will
suffice to show how the inequality of the existing
system of distribution would be rectified under the
present proposal. The county registered electors
for the three Yorkshire Ridings number 105,946,
and return 10 members. The Yorkshire boroughs
below the qualifying number of 6100, return 12
members from constituencies having an aggregate
of 18,552 registered electors. The effect of this is
to make the weight of an elector in a Yorkshire
borough nearly seven times that of an elector in a
Riding, although, if there is anything in qualification,

the latter should have the preference. Compare this with the result which would follow the adoption of our proposal. The county of Yorkshire and the smaller boroughs would be represented by 23 members. These would be equitably distributed: 6 to the 32,128 electors of the North Riding, 3 to the 11,417 electors of the East Riding, and 14 to the 80,933 electors of the West Riding.

These instances illustrate the working of our proposal in equalizing the representation of the county areas. The objection to be met is the disregard of the town centres of local government, when these contain less than the qualifying number of registered electors. In the first place, it is impossible to recognize, in any scheme of redistribution, every centre of local life, however small. The alternative system is that of grouping, which interferes to a much greater extent with local organization, and leads to the union of districts without common interests and having no common local head. In the second place, the inclusion of small boroughs in the surrounding county areas preserves the main features of local organization. Such boroughs are already, for many purposes, nothing more than constituent elements in the surrounding county organization, and they naturally take their place in the more extended local government which is immediately above them. There is no question of personal disfranchisement. The borough elector will not lose his vote, but will exercise it on equal terms with his immediate neighbours.

There is less difficulty in dealing with town constituencies, which, from the number of their registered electors, can claim to form separate constituencies. Their representation would be adjusted on the basis of the number of their registered electors, and with a view to equality. There is no reason for denying an equal representation to such large towns as London, Liverpool, Leeds, Manchester, and Birmingham. An elector is not the less capable of exercising his right to vote because he has been attracted to one of the most thriving centres of national life. London (including Chelsea, Finsbury, Hackney, Lambeth, Marylebone, the City, Southwark, Tower Hamlets, Westminster) has 338,642 registered electors, and is represented by 20 members. Taking 6100 as the qualifying number, London would be entitled to 56 members. On the same basis, Liverpool would be entitled to 10 members, Leeds to 8 members, Manchester to 9 members, Birmingham to 10 members. These numbers are large, but they are fair and equal. They should be adhered to, unless an agricultural labourer is held to have greater claims than a mechanic, or unless mechanics of different towns are held to have unequal claims.

The following is a complete list of members on the proposed plan of redistribution. The change which would be effected can be seen by a comparison of the two columns. The Metropolis could be divided into districts ; but this is not advisable, and an area capable of being managed under one

centre of local government, is capable of being treated as a representative unit. The members chosen at bye-elections should be elected by a simple majority of the representative unit in which a vacancy occurs. The chief value of bye-elections is the indication which they give of any change in popular opinion. This feature would be preserved, and it need not be feared that they would appreciably disarrange the balance of equality.

PLAN OF REDISTRIBUTION.

COUNTY AREAS.

	Proposed Representation.	Present Representation.
Anglesea (including Beaumaris).	2	2
Bedfordshire (including Bedford).	3	4
Berkshire (including Abingdon, Wallingford, Windsor, and Reading).	4	8
Brecknockshire (including Brecknock).	2	2
Buckinghamshire (including Buckingham, Aylesbury, Great Marlow, and Wycombe)....	4	8
Cambridgeshire (including Cambridge).	4	5
Cardiganshire (including Cardigan). ...	2	2
Carmarthenshire (including Carmarthen).	3	3
Carnarvonshire (including Carnarvon).	3	2
Cheshire (including Chester and Macclesfield).	8	10
Cornwall (including Helston, Launceston, Liskeard, Penryn and Falmouth, St. Ives, Truro, and Bodmin).	5	13
Cumberland (including Cockermouth, Whitehaven, and Carlisle).	5	8
Denbighshire (including Denbigh district). ...	3	3

	Proposed Repre-sentation.		Present Repre-sentation.
Derbyshire.	5	...	6
Devonshire (including Tiverton, Barnstaple, Tavistock, and Devonport)....	7	...	13
Dorsetshire (including Poole, Shaftesbury, Wareham, Weymouth, Bridport, and Dorchester).	4	...	10
Durham (including Durham City and Darlington).	5	...	7
Essex (including Harwich, Maldon, and Colchester).	7	...	10
Flintshire (including Flint district).	2	...	2
Glamorganshire.	2	...	2
Gloucestershire (including Stroud, Tewkesbury, Cirencester, Cheltenham, and Gloucester)....	8	...	11
Hampshire (including Andover, Lymington, Petersfield, Winchester, and Christchurch)...	5	...	10
Herefordshire (including Hereford and Leominster).	3	...	6
Hertfordshire (including Hertford).	3	...	4
Huntingdonshire (including Huntingdon). ...	2	...	3
Kent (including Deal and Sandwich, Rochester, Canterbury, Chatham, Dover, Gravesend, Maidstone, and Hythe).	13	...	19
Lancashire (including Ashton-under-Lyne, Clitheroe, and Stalybridge)....	17	...	11
Leicestershire.	4	...	4
Lincolnshire (including Stamford, Boston, and Grantham).	7	...	11
Merionethshire.	2	...	1
Middlesex.	7	...	2
Monmouthshire (including Monmouth district).	4	...	3
Montgomeryshire (including Montgomery district).	2	...	2
Norfolk (including Lynn Regis).	5	...	8
Northamptonshire (including Peterborough)....	4	...	6
Northumberland (including Berwick, Tynemouth, and Morpeth).	6	...	8
Nottinghamshire (including Newark). ...	4	...	6
Oxfordshire (including Banbury and Woodstock).	3	...	5

	Proposed Representation.		Present Representation.
Pembrokeshire (including Pembroke district and Haverfordwest).	3	...	3
Radnorshire (including Radnor district). ...	2	...	2
Rutlandshire.	2	...	2
Shropshire (including Ludlow, Bridgnorth, Shrewsbury, and Wenlock).	5	...	10
Somersetshire (including Taunton and Frome)...	6	...	9
Staffordshire (including Lichfield, Tamworth, Newcastle-under-Lyme, and Stafford). ...	8	...	13
Suffolk (including Bury St. Edmund's and Eye).	4	...	7
Surrey (including Guildford)....	11	...	7
Sussex (including Horsham, Midhurst, Lewes, Rye, Chichester, Hastings, and Shoreham)...	6	...	13
Warwickshire (including Warwick).	5	...	6
Westmoreland (including Kendal).	2	...	3
Wight, Isle of (including Newport).	2	...	2
Wiltshire (including Calne, Chippenham, Devizes, Malmesbury, Marlborough, Salisbury, Westbury, Wilton, and Cricklade district)...	6	...	15
Worcestershire (including Bewdley, Evesham, Droitwich, and Kidderminster).	6	...	8
Yorkshire, N. Riding (including Malton, Northallerton, Richmond, Scarborough, Thirsk, and Whitby).	6	...	9
Yorkshire, E. Riding.	3	...	2
Yorkshire, W. Riding (including Knaresborough, Pontefract, Ripon, and Wakefield).	14	...	11
	270		362

TOWN AREAS.

				Proposed Representation.		Present Representation.
Bath. ...	...	...	...	1	...	2
Birkenhead.	...	...	...	2	...	1
Birmingham.	...	...	...	10	...	3
Blackburn.	...	...	...	2	...	2
Bolton. ...	...	...	...	2	...	2

		Proposed Representation.	Present Representation.
Bradford.	... ...	5 ...	2
Brighton.	... ...	2 ...	2
Bristol. ...	... ...	4 ...	2
Burnley...	... ...	1 ...	1
Bury. ...	... ...	1 ...	1
Cardiff. ...	... ...	2 ...	1
Coventry.	... ...	1 ...	2
Derby. ...	... ...	2 ...	2
Dewsbury.	... ...	2 ...	1
Dudley....	... ...	2 ...	1
Exeter. ...	... ...	1 ...	2
Gateshead.	... ...	2 ...	1
Greenwich.	... ...	4 ...	2
Grimsby.	... ...	1 ...	1
Halifax....	... ...	2 ...	2
Hartlepool	... ...	1 ...	1
Huddersfield.	... ...	2 ...	1
Hull. ...	... ...	5 ...	2
Ipswich...	... ...	1 ...	2
Leeds. ...	... ...	8 ...	3
Leicester.	... ...	3 ...	2
Lincoln....	... ...	1 ...	2
Liverpool.	... ...	10 ...	3
Manchester.	... ...	9 ...	3
Merthyr-Tydvil...	... ...	2 ...	2
Middlesborough.	... ...	2 ...	1
Newcastle-upon-Tyne. ...	...	4 ...	2
Northampton. ...	... ...	1 ...	2
Norwich.	... ...	3 ...	2
Nottingham.	... ...	3 ...	2
Oldham.	... ...	4 ...	2
Oxford. ...	... ...	1 ...	2
Plymouth.	... ...	2 ...	2
Portsmouth.	... ...	3 ...	2
Preston....	... ...	2 ...	2
Retford....	... ...	1 ...	2
Rochdale.	... ...	2 ...	1
Salford. ...	... ...	4 ...	2
Sheffield.	... ...	7 ...	2

			Proposed Representation.		Present Representation.
Southampton. ...	...	...	1	...	2
South Shields. ...	...	...	2	...	1
Stockport. ...	...	...	1	...	2
Stoke-upon-Trent.	...	...	4	...	2
Stockton. ...	...	...	1	...	1
Sunderland. ...	...	...	3	...	2
Swansea. ...	...	...	2	...	1
Walsall.... ...	...	...	2	...	1
Warrington. ...	...	...	1	...	1
Wednesbury. ...	...	...	3	...	1
Wigan.	...	...	1	...	2
Wolverhampton.	...	...	4	...	2
Worcester. ...	...	...	1	...	2
York.	...	...	2	...	2
The Metropolis...	...	...	56	...	20
			214		122

Proposed representation in county and town areas, 484 ; present representation, 484.

So far we have explained the first step only towards equal representation—equal redistribution. The next consideration is the system of voting.

The simplest system of voting is the most effective. Each elector should have one vote and no more, and the candidates receiving the greater number of votes to be declared elected, as under the present system. This system has the merit of ensuring an equal weight to votes, and of making any manipulation of votes as difficult as possible. It compares favourably with the possible alternative systems of voting. These are at once less simple and less equal. In constituencies returning more

than two candidates, each voter is, under the present system, allowed one vote less than the number of representatives. The objection to this system is the opportunity which it gives of defeating the principle of equality. Take the instance of a constituency of 60,000 voters, 40,000 of which belong to the Conservative party, and 20,000 to the Liberal. The Conservatives would have the disposal of 80,000 votes. These could be arranged so as to ensure the election of all three members. Compare with this the principle of one man, one vote. The Liberals could ensure the return of their candidate, and no manipulation of votes could defeat their equal claims. The second alternative method is that of cumulative voting. Each elector has as many votes as there are candidates, and can distribute them in any way he may wish. The experience of School Board elections is not favourable to the extension of this system of voting. There is nothing gained by it; and it acts for the best if each voter, by giving all his votes to one candidate, assimilates its action to that of the simplest and fairest system—one man, one vote. The local heads of either party would arrange the votes of electors in such a way as to be most effective, but could not manipulate them ; and local independence would probably resent dictation from a central organization.

The following is a summary of results :—

(1) The representation of different constituencies is readjusted on the basis of equality. There is a

close approximation to equal redistribution, without which there cannot be equal representation. Dorsetshire, Cornwall, Wiltshire, Middlesex, and Yorkshire have been taken as illustrative cases.

(2) Equal distribution, when once established, would be maintained under a simple arrangement for self-adjustment.

(3) The importance of local government is fully recognized.

(4) 6100 electors in the same constituency, and often a less number, could ensure the election of their candidate. The importance of this change cannot be gauged by a reference to the last election. It is impossible that there should be many instances of minorities approaching the qualifying number, when the whole body of registered electors in a large number of constituencies was considerably less. When the larger constituencies are taken, there is some indication of the extent to which this fact would influence equal representation. In Birmingham a rejected candidate polled 15,735 votes, in Bolton 6539, in Bristol 9395, in Chelsea 9666, in Finsbury 12,800, in Greenwich 8152, in Hackney 10,322, in Hull 6767, in Lambeth 16,701, in North Lancashire 6500, in South-East Lancashire 10,569, in Leeds 11,965, in Manchester 20,268, in Middlesex 8876, in Oldham 8982, in Portsmouth 6040, in Salford 8400, in Shef-

field 16,506, in Tower Hamlets 10,384, in Westminster 6564, in Yorkshire North Riding 7749, in the different divisions of the West Riding 8341, 7140, and 10,391 respectively.

(5) The representative units are in most instances considerably enlarged. This is a necessary condition of equal representation, and is the only answer to the alternative proposal of equal electoral districts.

(6) The representation of the larger constituencies approaches most nearly to the principle of equality, and negatives the fear of disproportionate influence. It is not to be supposed that the Metropolis or other large towns would elect representatives belonging exclusively to one party.

(7) The system of voting is as simple as possible, and the present method of selecting the candidates to be returned is maintained.

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